



*Photo by Mike Wilson*

## Talk from the Trail: How to Get Involved in Trail Maintenance

by Trails Supervisor Rick Dicks

Many of our members join the club in order to “give back to the trail” by helping to maintain it. If you are a fairly new member, you might be wondering how you get involved in trail maintenance. There are several ways to contribute to the trail, depending on how often you want to go out, your physical condition, and what types of activities excite you.

The front-line soldier for trail maintenance is the section maintainer. A section maintainer agrees to perform basic maintenance for a given section of trail and commits to go out at least 4 times per year to work on that section. This includes removing weeds, cleaning water diversions and roots, and watching for developing problems. Depending on the section, the physical demands may range from fairly light to challenging. We work with anyone wanting to become a section maintainer to find a section that matches your needs and is, if possible, convenient to your home. We try to assign at least two maintainers to each section for increased safety and also to split the workload.

However, there are lots of ways to contribute other than being a section maintainer.

3rd Saturday work trips and district work trips are great for both the casual and the diehard maintainer. You go only when you want to - there is no minimum number of trips. This is a great way to work with a lot of experienced maintainers and develop your skills. It is also when all of the really big projects get worked on, so we need lots of people. All members are encouraged to go out on at least one 3rd Saturday trip if physically able.

We also have specialty crews that focus on one specific area.

You can join one or more of these crews. You do not need any trail maintenance experience to join any of these crews. Training is provided for each of the specialty areas.

-- The rock crew specializes in building rock steps, walls and other stone structures.

-- The sawyer crew removes all of the larger blowdowns (downed trees) from the trail. We have both chainsaw and crosscut teams. You do need Forest Service certification to operate the saw, but you do not need certification to join the crew.

-- The structures crew focuses on maintaining the shelters, privies, bear cables and boxes, bridges and other structures. Construction background is helpful but not required.

--The survey crew scouts each section of trail and assesses the required maintenance. This helps us understand where we need to allocate resources and schedule work trips. Experience in maintaining the trail is very helpful for this crew.

If you would like to become a trail maintainer but you don't know how to do trail maintenance, we offer several training trips each year. Some are a general overview of trail maintenance, while others may focus on a specific skill, such as berm removal. Training trips count as work trips, and you will do actual trail maintenance as part of the training, so these trips are an excellent way to try it out and see what it's all about.

Future articles will go into more depth on the specialty crews and on the available training. If you would like to get involved, just let me know and I'll help you get started. My email address is [trails\\_supervisor@georgia-atclub.org](mailto:trails_supervisor@georgia-atclub.org).